

PROPOSAL

For the better Supplying of

CHURCHES

IN OUR

Foreign Plantations,

AND FOR

Converting the Savage *Ameri-*
cans to CHRISTIANITY.

*The harvest is truly great, but the labourers are
few. Luke c. 10. v. 2.*



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THE PEOPLE

CHURCH





*A PROPOSAL for the
better supplying of
Churches in our foreign
Plantations, &c.*

ALTHOUGH there are several excellent persons of the church of England, whose good intentions and endeavours have not been wanting to propagate the gospel in foreign parts, who have even combined into a society for that very purpose, and given great encouragement, not only for English missionaries in the West-Indies, but also, for the reformed of other nations, led by their example to propagate christianity in the East: It is nevertheless acknowledged, that there is at this day, but little sense of religion, and a most notorious corruption of manners, in the English colonies settled on the continent of America, and the islands. It is also acknowledged that the gospel hath hitherto made but a very inconsiderable

ble progress among the neighbouring Americans, who still continue in much-what the same ignorance and barbarism, in which we found them above a hundred years ago.

I shall therefore venture to submit my thoughts upon a point, that I have long considered, to better judgments, in hopes that any expedient will be favourably hearkned to, which is proposed for the remedy of these evils. Now in order to effect this, it should seem the natural proper method, to provide, in the first place, a constant supply of worthy clergy-men for the English churches in those parts; and in the second place, a like constant supply of zealous missionaries well fitted for propagating christianity among the savages.

For tho' the surest means to reform the morals, and soften the behaviour of men, be, to preach to them the pure uncorrupt doctrine of the gospel, yet it cannot be denied that the success of preaching dependeth in good measure on the character and skill of the preacher: Forasmuch as mankind are more apt to copy characters than to practise precepts, and forasmuch as argument, to attain it's full strength, doth not less require the life of zeal, than the weight of reason; and the same doctrine, which maketh great impression, when delivered with decency and address, loseth very much of its force by passing thro' awkward or unskilful hands.

Now the clergy sent over to America have proved, too many of them, very meanly qualified both in learning and morals for the discharge of their office. And indeed little can be expected from the example or instruction of those,

those, who quit their native country on no other motive, than that they are not able to procure a livelihood in it, which is known to be often the case.

And tho' it be allowed that some of these have approved themselves men of merit, it will at the same time be allowed, that the most zealous and able missionary from England must find himself but ill qualified for converting the heathen, if we consider the difference of language, their wild way of living, and above all, the great jealousy and prejudice which savage nations have towards foreigners, or innovations introduced by them.

These considerations make it evident, that a college or seminary in those parts is very much wanted; and therefore the providing such a seminary, is earnestly proposed and recommended to all those, who have it in their power, to contribute to so good a work. By this, two ends would be obtained.

First, the youth of our English plantations might be themselves fitted for the ministry; and men of merit would be then glad to fill the churches of their native country, which are now a drain for the very dregs and refuse of ours.

At present, there are, I am told, many churches vacant in our plantations, and many very ill supplied; nor can all the vigilance and wisdom of that great prelate, whose peculiar care it is, prevent this, so long as the afore-said churches are supplied from England.

And, supplied they must be, with such as can be picked up in England or Ireland, till a nursery of learning for the education of the natives

tives is founded. This indeed might provide a constant succession of learned and exemplary pastors; and what effect this must be supposed to have on their flocks, I need not say.

Secondly, the children of savage Americans, brought up in such a seminary, and well instructed in religion and learning, might make the ablest and properest missionaries for spreading the gospel among their countrymen; who would be less apt to suspect, and readier to embrace a doctrine recommended by neighbours or relations, men of their own blood and language, than if it were proposed by foreigners, who would not improbably be thought to have designs on the liberty or property of their converts.

The young Americans necessary for this purpose, may, in the beginning be procured, either by peaceable methods from those savage nations, which border on our colonies, and are in friendship with us, or by taking captive the children of our enemies.

It is proposed to admit into the aforesaid college only such savages as are under ten years of age, before evil habits have taken a deep root; and yet not so early as to prevent retaining their mother tongue, which should be preserved by intercourse among themselves.

It is further proposed, to ground these young Americans thoroughly in religion and morality, and to give them a good tincture of other learning; particularly of eloquence, history, and practical mathematicks: to which it may not be improper to add some skill in physick.

If there were a yearly supply of ten or a dozen such missionaries sent abroad into their respective countries, after they had received the degree of master of arts in the aforesaid college, and holy orders in England, (till such time as episcopacy be established in those parts) it is hardly to be doubted, but, in a little time the world would see good and great effects thereof.

For, to any considering man, the employing American missionaries for the conversion of America, will, of all others, appear the most likely method to succeed ; especially if care be taken, that, during the whole course of their education, an eye should be had to their mission ; that they should be taught betimes to consider themselves as train'd up in that sole view, without any other prospect of provision, or employment ; that a zeal for religion, and love of their country, should be early and constantly instilled into their minds, by repeated lectures and admonitions ; that they should not only be incited by the common topics of religion and nature, but farther animated and enflamed by the great examples, in past ages, of publick spirit and virtue, to rescue their countrymen from their savage manners, to a life of civility and religion.

If his majesty would graciously please to grant a charter for a college to be erected in a proper place for these uses, it is to be hoped a fund may be soon raised, by the contribution of well-disposed persons, sufficient for building and endowing the same. For as the necessary expence would be small, so there are men of religion and humanity in England, who

who would be pleased to see any design set forward for the glory of God and the good of mankind.

A small expence would suffice to subsist and educate the American missionaries in a plain simple manner, such as might make it easy for them to return to the coarse and poor methods of life in use among their countrymen ; and nothing can contribute more to lessen this expence, than a judicious choice of the situation, where the seminary is to stand.

Many things ought to be considered in the choice of a situation. It should be in a good air ; in a place where provisions are cheap and plenty ; where an intercourse might easily be kept up with all parts of America and the islands ; in a place of security not exposed to the insults of pyrates, savages, or other enemies ; where there is no great trade, which might tempt the readers or fellows of the college to become merchants, to the neglect of their proper business ; where there are neither riches nor luxury to divert, or lessen their application, or to make them uneasy and dissatisfied with a homely frugal subsistence : lastly, where the inhabitants, if such a place may be found, are noted for innocence and simplicity of manners. I need not say of how great importance this point would be toward forming the morals of young students, and what mighty influence it must have on the mission.

It is evident the college long since projected in Barbadoes would be defective in many of these particulars ; for tho' it may have its use among the inhabitants, yet a place of
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so high trade, so much wealth and luxury, and such dissolute morals, not to mention the great price and scarcity of provisions; must at first sight seem a very improper situation for a general seminary intended for the forming missionaries, and educating youth in religion and sobriety of manners. The same objections lie against the neighbouring islands.

And if we consider the accounts given of their avarice and licentiousness, their coldness in the practice of religion, and their aversion from propagating it, (which appears in the withholding their slaves from baptism) it is to be feared, that the inhabitants in the populous parts of our plantations on the continent are not much fitter, than those in the islands above-mentioned, to influence or assist such a design. And as to the more remote and less frequented parts, the difficulty of being supplied with necessaries, the danger of being exposed to the inroads of savages; and above all, the want of intercourse with other places, render them improper situations for a seminary of religion and learning.

It will not be amiss to insert here an observation, I remember to have seen in an abstract of the proceedings, &c. annexed to the Dean of Canterbury's sermon, before the society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts; that the savage Indians, who live on the continent, will not suffer their children to learn English or Dutch, lest they should be debauched by conversing with their European neighbours; which is a melancholy, but strong confirmation of the truth of what hath been now advanced.

A general intercourse and correspondence with all the English colonies, both on the islands and the continent, and with other parts of America, hath been before laid down, as a necessary circumstance, the reason whereof is very evident. But this circumstance is hardly to be found. For on the continent, where there are neither inns, nor carriages, nor bridges over the rivers, there is no travelling by land between distant places. And the English settlements are reputed to extend along the sea-coast for the space of fifteen hundred miles. It is therefore plain, there can be no convenient communication between them, otherwise than by sea; no advantage therefore, in this point, can be gained by settling on the continent.

There is another consideration, which equally regards the continent and islands, that the general course of trade and correspondence lies from all those colonies to Great Britain alone: Whereas, for our present purpose, it would be necessary to pitch upon a place, if such could be found, which maintains a constant intercourse with all the other colonies, and whose commerce lies chiefly or altogether (not in Europe, but) in America.

There is but one spot that I can find, to which, this circumstance agrees: And that is the isles of Bermuda, otherwise called the Summer Islands. These having no rich commodity or manufacture, such as sugar, tobacco, or the like, wherewithal to trade to England, are obliged to become carriers for America, as the Dutch are for Europe. The Bermudans are excellent shipwrights and sailors,
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and have a great number of very good sloops, which are always passing and repassing from all parts of America. They drive a constant trade to the islands of Jamaica, Barbadoes, Antego, &c, with butter, onions, cabbages, and other roots and vegetables, which they have in great plenty and perfection. They have also some small manufactures of joyner's work and matting, which they export to the plantations on the continent. Hence Bermudan sloops are oftner seen in the ports of America, than any other. And indeed, by the best information I could get, it appears they are the only people of all the British plantations, who hold a general correspondence with the rest.

And, as the commerce of Bermuda renders it a very fit place, wherein to erect a seminary, so likewise doth its situation, it being placed between our plantations on the continent, and those in the isles, so as equally to respect both. To which may be added, that it lies in the way of vessels passing from America to Great Britain; all which makes it plain, that the youth, to be educated in a seminary placed in the Summer Islands, would have frequent opportunities of going thither and corresponding with their Friends. It must indeed be owned, that some will be obliged to go a long way to any one place, which we suppose resorted to, from all parts of our plantations; but if we were to look out a spot the nearest approaching to an equal distance from all the rest, I believe it would be found to be Bermuda. It remains, that we see whether it

enjoys the other qualities or conditions laid down as well as this.

The summer islands are situated near the latitude of thirty three degrees; no part of the world enjoys a purer air, or a more temperate climate, the great ocean which environs them, at once moderating the heat of the south winds and the severity of the north west. Such a latitude on the continent might be thought too hot; but the air in Bermuda is perpetually fanned and kept cool by sea-breezes, which renders the weather the most healthy and delightful that could be wished, being, (as is affirmed by persons, who have long lived there) of one equal tenour almost throughout the whole year, like the latter end of a fine May; insomuch that it is resorted to as the Montpelier of America.

Nor are these isles less remarkable for plenty than for health; there being, besides beef, mutton, and fowl, great abundance of fruits, and garden-stuff of all kinds in perfection: To this, if we add the prodigious plenty and variety of excellent fish, which is every day taken on their coasts, it would seem, that a seminary could no where be supplied with better provisions, or cheaper than here.

About forty years ago, upon cutting down many tall cedars, that sheltered their orange-trees from the north-west-wind (which sometimes blows, even there, so as to affect that delicate plant) great part of their orange plantations suffered; but other cedars are since grown up, and no doubt a little industry would again produce as great plenty of oranges, as ever was there heretofore. I mention this,

this, because some have inferred from the present scarcity of that fruit, for which Bermuda was once so famous, that there hath been a change in the soil and climate for the worse. But this, as hath been observed, proceeded from another cause, which is now in great measure taken away.

Bermuda is a cluster of small islands, which lie in a very narrow compass, containing, in all, not quite twenty thousand acres. This groupe of isles is (to use Mr. Waller's expression) walled round with rocks, which render them inaccessible to pyrates, or enemies; there being but two narrow entrances, both well guarded by forts. It would therefore be impossible to find any where, a more secure retreat for students.

The trade of Bermuda consists only in garden-stuff, and some poor manufactures, principally of cedar and the palmetto leaf. Bermuda hats are worn by our ladies: They are made of a sort of mat, or (as they call it) platting made of the palmetto leaf, which is the only commodity that I can find exported from Bermuda to Great Britain; and as there is no prospect of making a fortune by this small trade, so it cannot be supposed to tempt the fellows of the college to engage in it, to the neglect of their peculiar business, which might possibly be the case elsewhere.

Such as their trade is, such is their wealth; the inhabitants being much poorer than the other colonies, who do not fail to despise them upon that account. But if they have less wealth, they have withal less vice and expensive folly than their neighbours. They are
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represented as a contented, plain, innocent sort of people, free from avarice and luxury, as well as the other corruptions that attend those vices.

I am also informed, that they are more constant attendants on divine service, more kind and respectful to their pastor, (when they have one) and shew much more humanity to their slaves and charity to one another, than is observed among the English in the other plantations: one reason of this may be, that condemned criminals, being employed in the manufactures of sugar and tobacco, were never transported thither. But, whatever be the cause, the facts are attested by a Clergyman of good credit, who lived long among them.

Among a people of this character, and in a situation thus circumstantiated, it would seem that a religious seminary might very fitly be placed. The correspondence with other parts of America, the goodness of the air, the plenty and security of the place, the frugality and innocence of the inhabitants, all conspiring to favour such a design. Thus much at least is evident, that young students would be there less liable to be corrupted in their morals; and the governing part would be easier, and better contented with a small stipend and a retired academical life, in a corner from whence avarice and luxury are excluded, than they can be supposed to be in the midst of a full trade and great riches, attended with all that high living and parade which our planters affect, and which, as well as all fashionable vices, should be far removed from the eyes of the young American missionaries, who are to lead

lead a life of poverty and self-denial among their countrymen.

After all, it must be acknowledged, that though every thing else should concur with our wishes, yet if a set of good governors and teachers be wanting, who are acquainted with the methods of education, and have the zeal and ability requisite for carrying on a design of this nature, it would certainly come to nothing.

An institution of this kind should be set on foot by men of prudence, spirit, and zeal, as well as competent learning, who should be led to it by other motives than the necessity of picking up a maintenance. For upon this view, what man of merit can be supposed to quit his native country, and take up with a poor college-subsistence in another part of the world, where there are so many considerable parishes actually void, and so many others ill supplied for want of fitting incumbents? Is it likely, that fellowships of forty or fifty pounds a year should tempt abler or worthier men, than benefices of many times their value?

And except able and worthy men do first engage in this affair, with a resolution to exert themselves in forming the manners of the youth, and giving them a proper education, it is evident the mission and the college will be put in a very bad way. This inconvenience seems the most difficult to provide against, and, if not provided against, it will be the most likely to obstruct any design of this nature. So true it is, that where ignorance or ill manners once take place in a seminary, they are

are sure to be handed down in a succession of illiterate or worthless men.

There are many instances of this in the Jesuite's colleges throughout Italy, where the noblest foundations and the finest genius's in the world are quite lost by a wrong turn and taste in the regents. And to come nearer our present case, the same may be observed in the two presbyterian colleges of New England, which have so long subsisted to little or no purpose, if we may believe the accounts that are given of them. See *British empire in America*.

But this apprehension, which seems so well grounded, that a college in any part of America would either lie unprovided, or be worse provided than their churches are, hath no place in Bermuda; there being at this time several gentlemen, in all respects very well qualified, and in possession of good preferments, and fair prospects at home, who having seriously considered the great benefit that may arise to the church and to mankind from such an undertaking, are ready to engage in it, and to dedicate the remainder of their lives to the instructing the youth of America, and prosecuting their own studies upon a very moderate subsistence in a retirement, so sweet, and so secure, and every way so well fitted for a place of education, and study, as Bermuda.

Thus much the writer hereof thought himself obliged to say of his associates: For himself, he can only say, that as he values no preferment upon earth, so much as that of being employed in the execution of this design; so he hopes to make up for other defects, by his industry and zeal.

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In Europe, the protestant religion hath of late years considerably lost ground, and America seems the likeliest place, wherein to make up for what hath been lost in Europe, provided the proper methods are taken: Otherwise the Spanish missionaries in the South, and the French in the North, are making such a progress, as may one day spread the religion of Rome, and with it the usual hatred to protestants, throughout all the savage nations in America; which would probably end in the utter extirpation of our colonies, on the safety whereof depends so much of the nation's wealth, and so considerable a branch of his majesty's revenue.

But if this scheme were pursued, it would in all probability have much greater influence on the Americans, than the utmost endeavours of popish emissaries can possibly have; who from the difference of country, language and interest, must lie under far greater difficulties and discouragements than those, whom we suppose yearly sent out from Bermuda to preach among their countrymen.

It cannot indeed be denied, that the great number of poor regulars inured to hard living, and brought up in an implicit obedience to their superiors, hath hitherto given the church of Rome, in regard to her missions, great advantage over the reformed churches. But from what hath been said, it is, I think, evident, that this advantage may be overbalanced by our employing American missionaries.

Nor is the honour of the crown, nation, and church of England unconcerned in this

scheme; which, it is to be hoped, will remove the reproach, we have so long lain under, that we fall as far short of our neighbours of the Romish communion in zeal for propagating religion, as we surpass them in the soundness and purity of it. And at the same time, that the doing what may be so easily done, takes away our reproach; it will cast no small lustre on his majesty's reign, and derive a blessing from heaven on his administration, and those who live under the influence thereof.

Men of narrow minds have a peculiar talent at objection, being never at a loss for something to say against whatsoever is not of their own proposing. And perhaps, it will be said in opposition to this proposal, that if we thought ourselves capable of gaining converts to the church, we ought to begin with papists, infidels, and dissenters of all denominations at home, and to make proselytes of these, before we think of foreigners; and that therefore our scheme is against duty. And further, that considering the great opposition, which is found on the part of those, who differ from us at home, no success can be expected among savages abroad, and that therefore it is against reason and experience.

In answer to this I say, that religion like light is imparted without being diminished. That whatever is done abroad, can be no hindrance or let to the conversion of infidels and dissenters at home. That those who engage in this affair, imagine they will not be missed, where there is no want of schools or clergy; but that they may be of singular service in
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countries, but thinly supplied with either, or altogether deprived of both : That our colonies, being of the same blood, language, and religion with ourselves, are in effect our countrymen. But that christian charity, not being limited by those regards, doth extend to all mankind. And this may serve for an answer to the first point, that our design is against duty.

To the second point I answer ; that ignorance is not so incurable as error ; that you must pull down as well as build, erase as well as imprint, in order to make profelytes at home : Whereas, the savage Americans, if they are in a state purely natural and unimproved by education, they are also unincumbred with all that rubbish of superstition and prejudice, which is the effect of a wrong one. As they are less instructed, they are withal less conceited, and more teachable. And not being violently attached to any false system of their own, are so much the fitter to receive that which is true. Hence it is evident, that success abroad ought not to be measured by that which we observe at home, and that the inference, which was made from the difficulty of the one to the impossibility of the other, is altogether groundless.

It is most true, notwithstanding our present corruptions, that there are to be found in no country under the sun men of better inclinations or greater abilities for doing good than in England. But it is as true, that success, in many cases, dependeth not upon zeal, industry, wealth, learning, or the like faculties, so much as on the method, wherein these are applied.

We often see a small proportion of labour and expence in one way, bring that about, which in others a much greater share of both could never effect. It hath been my endeavour to discover this way or method in the present case. What hath been done, I submit to the judgment of all good and reasonable men; who, I am persuaded, will never reject or discourage a proposal of this nature on the score of slight objections, surmises, or difficulties, and thereby render themselves chargeable with the having prevented those good effects, which might otherwise have been produced by it.

For it is, after all, possible, that unforeseen difficulties may arise in the prosecution of this design, many things may retard, and many things may threaten to obstruct it; but there is hardly any enterprize or scheme whatsoever for the publick good, in which difficulties are not often shewing themselves, and as often overcome by the blessing of God, upon the prudence and resolution of the undertakers: though, for ought that appears, the present scheme is as likely to succeed, and attended with as few difficulties, as any of this kind can possibly be.

For to any man, who considers the divine power of religion, the innate force of reason and virtue, and the mighty effects often wrought by the constant regular operation even of a weak and small cause; it will seem natural and reasonable to suppose, that rivulets perpetually issuing forth from a fountain, or reservoir, of learning and religion, and streaming thro' all parts of America, must in due
time

time have a great effect, in purging away the ill manners and irreligion of our colonies, as well as the blindness and barbarity of the nations round them: Especially, if the reservoir be in a clean and private place, where its waters, out of the way of any thing that may disturb or muddy them, remain clear and pure: Otherwise, they are more likely to pollute than purify the places through which they flow.

Those, who wish well to religion and mankind, will need no other motive to forward an undertaking calculated for the service of both: I shall, nevertheless, beg leave to observe, that whoever would be glad to cover a multitude of sins by an extensive and well judged charity, or whoever, from an excellent and godlike temper of mind, seeks opportunities of doing good in his generation, will be pleased to meet with a scheme that so peculiarly puts it in his power, with small trouble or expence, to procure a great and lasting benefit to the world.

Ten pounds a year, would (if I mistake not) be sufficient to defray the expence of a young American in the college of Bermuda, as to dyet, lodging, cloaths, books, and education: And if so, the interest of two hundred pounds may be a perpetual fund for maintaining one missionary at the college for ever; and in this succession, many, it is to be hoped, may become powerful instruments for converting to christianity and civil life whole nations, who now sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and whose cruel brutal manners are a disgrace to human nature.

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action of this kind seems to enlarge
being of a man, extending it to all
places and to future times; inasmuch as
unseen countries, and after ages, may feel the
effects of his bounty, while he himself reaps
the reward in the blessed society of all those
who, *having turned many to righteousness, shine
as the stars for ever and ever.*



F I N I S.

